

Mischodon zeylanicus Thwaites (Euphorbiaceae) – A Rare Tree Species New to Andaman Islands

Abstract

Mischodon zeylanicus Thwaites, endemic to Sri Lanka and Peninsular India, is reported from Andaman Islands.

Keywords: Monotypic genus, *Mischodon zeylanicus*, Andaman Islands.

Introduction

Oldfieldioideae Koehler & G.L. Webster (1967) is the most recently established subfamily of Euphorbiaceae. It consists of 28 genera and c. 100 species distributed mainly in the Southern Hemisphere including South America, Madagascar and Australia. This monotypic genus described from Sri Lanka and subsequently reported as doubtfully occurring in Peninsular India by Beddome (1873) is the only representative of this subfamily in South Asia.

Gamble (1925) gave Anamalai hills and Tinnevelly, both in Tamil Nadu, as areas of distribution for this taxon. There has been no recent collection of this species from peninsular India though Raju (1984) cited a specimen from Kodaikanal hills of Madurai district of Tamil Nadu doubting whether the species occurred wild in South India.

The first author collected this species from the virgin forests of Jarawa Territory of Middle Andaman Island during a recent botanical survey. This species is easily distinguishable by its red coloured young leaves and short cinnamomeous indumentum on young branches, leaves and inflorescences.

Mischodon zeylanicus Thwaites, Hooker's J. Bot. Kew Gard. Misc. 6: 300, t. 10 B. 1854 & Enum. Pl. Zeyl. 275. 1864; Muell.-Arg. in DC., Prodr. 15(2): 1124. 1866; Beddome, Fl. Sylv. t. 290. 1873; Hook. f., Fl. Brit. India 5: 344. 1887; Pax & Hoffm. in Engler, Pflanzenr. IV.147.xv (heft 81): 292. 1922; Gamble, Fl. Pres. Madras 1312. 1925; Airy Shaw, Kew Bull. 26: 497. 1972, in obs.; V.S. Raju, J. Econ. Taxon. Bot. 5: 165. 1984; Philcox in Dassan. & Clayton, Rev. Handb. Fl. Ceylon 11: 267. 1997.

Dioecious evergreen trees, c. 10 m high, glabrous (except for the sparsely cinnamomeous-puberulous young branches, leaves and inflorescences), branchlets subtetragonal, smooth, 3-7 mm thick, pubescent, greyish. Leaves simple, 3-4 verticillate, narrowly oblong, oblong-lanceolate or oblanceolate-oblong, 7-25 x 1.5-6 cm, narrowed and rounded to subcordate at base, entire along margins, narrowed, emarginate or rounded at apex, coriaceous, glabrous, dark green above, pale green beneath, penninerved; midrib slightly raised above, conspicuously raised beneath; lateral nerves 7-14 per side, faint above, prominent beneath, ascending, arcuate, forming brochidodromous loops with the superadjacents; tertiary nerves obscure above, somewhat prominent beneath, laxly reticulate; petioles 5-12 x 2-3 mm, terete, densely pubescent to subglabrous; stipules obsolete or minute (reportedly adnate to the petioles). Inflorescences axillary, cymose, pedunculate, solitary, in pairs or racemiform (up to 9 cm long and bearing up to 8 fruits); peduncles 1-2 cm long, 2-2.5 mm thick at base, pinkish, minutely white-lenticellate; fruiting pedicels 6-20 mm long, 1-2 mm thick. Capsules depressed globose, deeply 3 (-4)-lobed with bluntly keeled lobes, 8-10 x 14-17 mm, initially dark green, turning pinkish, glabrous; seeds undeveloped.

Fruiting: August. Flowers not seen.

Common name: Tampanai (Tamil).

Distribution: India (Tamil Nadu, Andaman & Nicobar islands) and Sri Lanka. This tree is under cultivation in Indian Botanical Garden, Howrah.

Specimens Examined: INDIA, Andaman & Nicobar Islands: Middle Andaman Island, Jarawa Reserve, Dhani Nallah, 21.08. 2002, T. Chakrabarty 19173 (CAL).

Acknowledgements

We are thankful to Dr M. Sanjappa, Director, Botanical Survey of India, Kolkata for deputing the first author as a member of the multidisciplinary team to carry out studies on the Jarawa tribe of the Andaman Islands organised by the Directorate of Tribal Welfare, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Port Blair.

Literature Cited

Beddome, R. H. 1873. *The Flora Sylvatica for Southern India.* t. 290. Gantz Brothers, Madras.

Gamble, J. S. 1925. *The Flora of Presidency of Madras*, vol 2, p. 1312. Adlard & Sons, London.

Raju, V. S. 1984. Notes on *Mischodon zeylanicus* Thwaites: A little known Euphorbiaceous plant from Sri Lanka and southern India. *J. Econ. Taxon. Bot.* 5: 165 – 167.

Webster, G. L. 1967. The genera of Euphorbiaceae of the southern United States. *J. Arnold Arb.* 48: 303 – 430.

Received : 14.11.2005

Accepted : 05.12.2005

T. Chakrabarty and N. P. Balakrishnan¹

Botanical Survey of India, Industrial Section, Indian Museum
 1 Sudder Street. Kolkata 700016, India.

E mail: tchakrab@gmail.com

¹13-14 B. P. C. Nagar, Thondamuthur Road

Coimbatore 641046, India. E mail: npbalakr@vsnl.net